being taken in Kent for the first time as late as 1959, and I first saw it at Dartford in 1973, since when it has become less rare. Like *carbonaria*, these melanic forms are also dominant genetically.

The decline in the relative frequency of *carbonaria* at Dartford indicated by the figures over three year periods does represent a decline of almost 1% per year; it will be interesting to see what the future trend will be, including the rapidity of any changes which may occur. This also applies to species in which melanism has appeared in this area only recently, but appears to be increasing. Finally worth mentioning is one common species which at Dartford appears to produce melanic forms to the extent of 100%, this is *Chloroclystis rectangulata* L., although in the 1930s of the many specimens I used to see at rest on the apple and pear tree trunks and adjacent structures in my garden included many of the green typical form; melanic forms of this species were encountered in N. W. Kent as early as the late nineteenth century.

References

Chalmers-Hunt, J. M., 1968-81, *Butterflies and moths of Kent* 3 Arbroath.

Ford, E., 1955, *Moths.*

Kettlewell, B., 1973, *The Evolution of Melanism.*

Thames-side Joint Committee for the Abatement of Atmospheric Pollution, *Reports* 1968-73.

SANGUISORBA OFFICINALIS LINNAEUS.: A FOODPLANT OF BISTON BETULARIA (L.) (LEPIDOPTERA: GEOMETRIDAE) – On 22nd September 1987 I observed one caterpillar of *Biston betularia,* peppered moth, on a plant of *Sanguisorba officinalis* Linn., great burnet, in Honey Slough west field, Fryent Country Park, Middlesex (v.c.21). The caterpillar measured 64 mm in length and of particular note was the camouflage which mimicked the black and whitish discolourations that often occur on great burnet stems at this time of the year. The caterpillar was again observed in different positions or on different stems of the same plant on the 23rd 25th, 26th and 27th September, but was no longer present when the plant was next checked on 4th October. It was evident that leaves were eaten between each observation and in a systematic fashion, with all the leaves on a stem being eaten before the caterpillar moved onto a new stem.

Scorer, A. G. 1913, in his *Entomologist's Log-book* (Routledge) lists *Betula, Cytisus scoparius, Fagus, Prunus, Quercus, Rosa, Rubus fruticosus, Salix, Tilia* and *Ulmus* as larval foodplants of this moth. Allan, P. B. M., 1949, *Larval Foodplants* states that *Bison betularia*

has been found on almost every species of native deciduous tree and shrub. *Sanguisorba officinalis* is a perennial herb and does not appear to have been previously recorded as a foodplant of *Biston betularia*.

I am grateful to C. W. Plant at the Passmore Edwards Museum for checking the identificiation of the caterpillar and for drawing attention to the possible significiance of this record – L. R. WILLIAMS, Brent Leisure Services, Brent House, Wembley High Road, Middlesex HA9 6SX.

A FURTHER NOTE ON THE BRITISH SPECIES OF DACNE (COL.: EROTYLIDAE) – Mr. D. A. Prance's note on the relative incidence of our two species of this genus in Wales (*antea:* **99** 185) gives me occasion to remark that, in my experience, the difference he draws attention to is equally pronounced in south-east England and probably therefore over their entire British range; and further, that over a long period there would seem to have been a definite reversal. To get the complete picture one has to go back to last century, in which Fowler (1889, *Col. Brit.Isl.* **3**: 183) notes *D. rufifrons* as locally common, and *D. humeralis* (i.e. *bipustulata*) as rare, giving for each a similar distribution. Thus on first finding a *Dacne* (*D. bipustulata* freely at Chilham, E. Kent, 1931), having then only Fowler's work to consult, I concluded I had got a rarity. All later experience, however, pointed to this last as much the commoner of the two species. I do not remember ever finding more than a few *rufifrons* at a time, whereas *bipustulata* is often abundant and seldom occurs singly. I have long looked upon *rufifrons* as uncommon, or even scarce. Of course, if Fowler inadvertently transposed his data for the two species, the apparent reversal of their frequency over time would be illusory. – A. A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, London, SE7.

UNUSUAL FLIGHT TIMES FOR ALSOPHILA AESCULARIA D. & S. (THE MARCH MOTH (LEP.: GEOMETRIDAE)) – A single male of this species was caught in the Rothamsted Insect Survey Light trap at Warehorne, in Kent (Site No. 478. O. S. Grid ref. TQ 988 346) on the night of 13/14.ix.1987. The species usually flies in March and April, varying slightly according to the season.

On searching our extensive database we found only three other occasions when *aescularia* had been recorded well outside its normal flight period: A single male was caught at Tarleton, Lancashire (Site No. 371, O.S. Grid ref. SD446 224) on 20/21.vii. 1980 and two males were caught at Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire (Site No. 49, O.S. Grid ref. NH 366 092) on 2.xi.1975. ADRIAN M. RILEY, Entomology Department, Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 2JQ.